



# Department of Justice

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## **FORMER MEMBER OF ARMED SERVICES PLEADS GUILTY TO PARTICIPATING IN BRIBERY AND EXTORTION CONSPIRACY**

WASHINGTON – A former member of the U.S. armed services pleaded guilty today in the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona in Tucson for his role in a widespread bribery and extortion conspiracy, Acting Assistant Attorney General Rita M. Glavin of the Criminal Division announced today.

The charges arise from Operation Lively Green, an undercover investigation conducted by the FBI that began in December 2001. To date, 56 additional defendants have been sentenced for their roles in the conspiracy.

Rommel I. Schroer, 33, a former sergeant in the U.S. Air Force, pleaded guilty today to one count of conspiring to enrich himself by obtaining cash bribes from people he believed to be narcotics traffickers in return for his assistance, protection, and participation in the activities of what he believed to be an illegal narcotics-trafficking organization that distributed cocaine from Arizona to other locations in the southwestern United States. In reality, the narcotics traffickers were undercover FBI agents. According to court documents, in order to protect the shipments of cocaine, Mr. Schroer and his co-conspirators wore official uniforms, carried official forms of identification, and used official vehicles, when necessary, to prevent police stops, searches and seizures of the narcotics as they drove the cocaine shipments through checkpoints manned by the U.S. Border Patrol, the Arizona Department of Public Safety and Nevada law enforcement officers.

The case is part of a joint investigation being conducted by the Southern Arizona Corruption Task Force (SACTF), which is comprised of the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the Department of Homeland Security and the Tucson Police Department. The Arizona Air National Guard, Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Defense Criminal Investigative Service and the Criminal Investigation Division of the Internal Revenue Service are also participating in the investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Michael Ferrara and Peter Koski of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section, headed by Chief William M. Welch II. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Oklahoma has also secured the guilty pleas of 14 defendants in a related investigation, Operation Tarnish Star.

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